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*The Sin against the Holy Ghost,*

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S E R M O N,

PREACHED, ON SUNDAY, JULY 15, 1798, AT

THE CITY CHAPEL, GRUB STREET,

From MATT. xii. 31, 32.

BY

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Beware of Men—Have faith for thyself.

Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

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## The Sin against the Holy Ghost.

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MATT. xii. 31, 32.

*Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men : And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him ; neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.*

CONCERNING the sin spoken of in my text there have been great searchings of heart. Many have been greatly exercised in their minds with the most fearful apprehension of having committed the unpardonable sin. What can be said to such tried and tempt-

ed souls? Some perhaps may say, Let them alone; it will do them good; the Lord knows best when, and how to deliver them; leave them in his hands, he will take care of them. All this is true: Certainly the Lord knows best when, and how to deliver the godly out of temptation; neither will he suffer them to be tempted above that which they are able to bear; for, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. But, I would ask, Does this exclude the means of grace? Does this dissolve the bonds of mutual sympathy? Does this supersede such exhortations as these; To bear each other's burden; to comfort the feeble-minded? As each member in the body has its proper office, and performs its proper function, so it is in the church of Christ; different offices, and diversity of gifts, all intended for general good; the edification of our souls in love, and the establishment of our hearts in grace. The tears flowing from godly sorrow, and the sighs arising from a wounded conscience, call for the wine

wine and oil of gospel consolation, and for the kind instruction of some faithful friend, whom the Lord has made wise unto salvation, and to whom he has given the tongue of the learned, that he may know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," is a commandment given, not only to the prophets of old, but to the ministers of Christ in all ages; and, blessed be God, he who gave the commandment, gives also the disposition to observe it, and an earnest desire of soul to seek the welfare, peace, and prosperity of Zion.

In order to pacify such troubled consciences as are fearful lest they might have committed the unpardonable sin, some have said, That it is impossible for any one in the present day to be guilty of this sin. To this I can by no means agree; nevertheless, I am fully satisfied that those whose hearts the Lord has made tender, who pray to be kept from that and all other sins, who watch over themselves with a godly jealousy,

lously, are very far indeed from having committed that sin, which is attended either with judicial hardness or black despair.

In speaking from the words of my text I propose to shew,

First, that the sin against the Holy Ghost may be committed in the present day.

Secondly, I propose to shew what is *not* the sin against the Holy Ghost, and what *is*.

Thirdly, I would shew the greatness of this sin, and why it is unpardonable.

Fourthly, By whom this sin may be committed, and by whom it cannot have been committed.

1. I propose to shew that the sin against the Holy Ghost may be committed in the present day.

Those



Those who say that this sin cannot be committed in the present day, argue from the circumstances which gave occasion to the words, " There was brought unto our Lord one possessed of a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him; insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Our Lord, having made a reply to this most horrid and infernal charge, declares it to be an unpardonable sin, never to be forgiven, neither in this life, nor in that which is to come, to ascribe the miracles which he wrought to the agency of an evil spirit, because this blasphemy, or evil-speaking, is not directed against him, as the Son of Man, but against that Power by which his miracles were wrought. That this is our Lord's drift, is plain from these words: " Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree

“ corrupt and his fruit corrupt ; for the  
 “ tree is known by its fruit.” Now as  
 extraordinary miracles are not to be expect-  
 ed in the present day, and as our Lord is  
 not *now* upon this earth, as he was *then*,  
 therefore some are willing to conclude that  
 it is impossible now for any one to commit  
 this sin.

In answer to this I observe, that though  
 miracles are not wrought now in such a vi-  
 sible and extraordinary manner as they were  
 then, yet there are standing miracles in the  
 church, which cannot be accounted for ac-  
 cording to the common laws of nature, and  
 the principles of human reason.

The continuance of a church in the  
 world, and the propagation of the gospel,  
 is a standing miracle ; as much so, as to see  
 a bush burning with fire, and yet for that  
 bush not to be consumed. The conversion  
 of a sinner is a standing miracle, and this  
 every one will acknowledge who has known  
 and felt the evil of sin, and the enmity of

the carnal mind against a free grace gospel. Though therefore the Holy Ghost is not given now in a public and visible manner, yet his influence is still experienced, in those ordinary operations by which alone the sinner can be effectually converted to God, and be renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Though our Lord is not present upon this earth, as he was when the words were spoken, yet the Spirit is now, and ever shall be, with the church, to the end of time; and it is against this blessed and holy Spirit that this sin is committed.

But the testimony of St. John clearly proves the possibility of committing this sin; for it is certain that he wrote his epistles after our Lord's ascension into heaven; and he speaks expressly of a sin unto death. All unrighteousness, he says, is sin, and there is a sin not unto death, and there is a sin unto death. What can this sin unto death be, if it be not the sin against the Holy Ghost?

I shall

I shall not enter, at present, upon that remarkable passage in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, chap. vi, ver. 4, as I propose, at some future opportunity, to speak expressly from those words.

If Annanias and Sapphira, Alexander the coppersmith, Hymeneus and Philetus, or any one of them, committed the unpardonable sin, it must then follow that this sin has been committed since our Lord's ascension into heaven; and indeed, if it was not possible for others to do the same, why was the warning given? In the holy scriptures there is nothing written in vain.

I come now, it being the second thing proposed, to shew what is *not* the sin against the Holy Ghost, and what *is*.

All unrighteousness, I have already observed from St. John, is sin, but every sin is not a sin unto death; because, Christ having died for the transgressions under the first covenant, therefore every one, who believes in him, is saved from the  
curse



curse and condemnation pronounced by that covenant, upon all who are transgressors of it, in any one instance; as many as live and die under the law, shall finally be judged by the law; "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." Thus we all, as transgressors of the law, are equally condemned; but as many as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are wholly delivered from its curse and condemnation. Some have considered unbelief, and others (which amounts to the same thing) have considered final impenitency, to be the sin against the Holy Ghost; but unbelief and final impenitency cannot, since Adam's transgression, be considered as particular acts of sin, but rather the particular state in which the soul may be said to be shut up; a state of unbelief, a state of hardness and blindness, a state of rebellion against God, a state of sin and death, of course, condemnation; and, whilst in that state, every action, every word, and every thought, is sinful; for the imaginations of the heart are only evil, and that

that continually ; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

No sin (considered as a transgression of the first covenant), let it be ever so heinous, can amount to the sin against the Holy Ghost, not even the crucifying of our blessed Lord. Whilst he was hanging on the tree he prayed even for his murderers ; and we must conclude that his prayers were heard and answered. In that sermon which St. Peter preached to the Jews, at the day of Pentecost, he addressed them as the very men who had slain our Lord ; and under that sermon it appears that three thousand of those very men were really converted. Oh ! the patience and the forgiveness of our God ! How astonishing must be his grace ! With hearts full of rage and malice, and with horrid imprecations, the Jews cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children." Blessed be God ! so it was, not to their condemnation, but salvation ; the blood of Jesus speaks better things than the blood of Abel ; for that blood, which  
 appeared

appeased divine wrath, when sprinkled on the sinner's conscience, cleanseth it from all sin.

Persecution itself, if done ignorantly and in unbelief, is by no means the sin against the Holy Ghost. Manasseh was a cruel persecutor, he shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; yet, in his affliction he besought the Lord his God and prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication. A more striking instance cannot be produced than the apostle Paul, who tells us that he was a blasphemer and injurious; and to these blasphemies, I am well convinced, he refers in his epistle to the Romans, chap. ix, ver. 1, which passage, as it reads in our present translation, has distressed many, who could not conceive how the apostle, upon any account, could wish himself accursed from Christ. Vain are the attempts of commentators to reconcile this with christian experience and the love of Christ; but a plain, easy,

easy, just, and literal translation, removes the difficulty at once. It ought not to have been translated, "*I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ,*" but, "*I myself did wish to be accursed from Christ.*" Every school-boy knows that *did* is the sign of the preterimperfect tense. And *ἠύχουντο* is the preterimperfect tense of the verb *εύχουμαι*, which means, *to glory* or *to wish*. Each of these senses may be well retained, for there is no doubt with me, but that St. Paul did once even glory in wishing himself accursed from Christ, and that, too, *more* than any of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. The preposition *ὑπέρ* (in Latin *super*) which is translated *For*, would be better translated, in my opinion, according to its general and true meaning, *more, above, beyond*.—Thus the difficulty is removed; there would be no need then of saying that the preterimperfect tense is put for the potential mood. This confession corresponds with others of the same nature; here is ground for that self abasement, deep contrition, heart felt compunction



punction he speaks of, as arising from the remembrance of his former rage and madness, malice and enmity ; here is a striking proof of free and discriminating grace, of sovereign and electing love ; This is a pertinent and suitable introduction to the subject on which he is going to enter ; How clearly does this prove election to be of grace ? Seeing that such a man as Saul of Tarsis, who shewed more malice than any other against the name of Jesus, not only received grace, but apostleship ; became the apostle of the resurrection, the apostle of the circumcision, was called of God to take the bishopric from which Judas by transgression fell.

As persecution does not constitute this sin against the Holy Ghost, if done ignorantly and in unbelief ; so neither does apostacy, if committed through the weakness and infirmity of the flesh, through fear, or from sudden surprise, or the prevalency of some strong temptation ; and not from malicious wickedness, nor from the accursed desire

desire of worldly gain and worldly honour.  
 Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness.  
 Judas bargained for thirty pieces of silver.  
 Gardener, bishop of Winchester, sought  
 preferment in the church: But Cranmer  
 recanted through fear; and, through a sud-  
 den surprise of fear, Peter denied his Lord.  
 I shall venture to affirm that Peter, in and  
 of himself, was no better than Judas be-  
 fore calling; and after calling Peter plainly  
 discovered the seeds of apostasy yet remain-  
 ing in his heart, had he not been kept by  
 the immediate power and influence of God  
 himself. It is, says Paul, by the grace of  
 God I am what I am. I really feel it to be  
 thus with myself; nay, I wish to feel daily  
 and hourly my need of being kept by divine  
 grace; and can say with St. Paul, that,  
 after having preached to others, I myself  
 should be at last a cast away, was I not  
 kept by divine grace, and thereby assisted  
 to beat down my body, i. e. the old man,  
 that body of sin and death; and to lead  
 captivity captive, i. e. to lead that captive  
 which otherwise would lead me captive;  
 mortifying

mortifying the deeds of the body by continued acts of self-denial, self-abasement, and self-abhorrence ; cleaving to Jesus as my Lord, my life, my head ; laying hold of his righteousness, and renouncing all my own ; depending upon his faithfulness, and renouncing all my own : Blessed be God that we are not our own ; we are bought with a price, bought and paid for ; the purchaser must have his bargain ; as we are not our own property, so neither are we our own keepers ; he that keepeth us is the Lord. This is our security, and the heart can never be established upon any other ground.

It does by no means constitute the unpardonable sin to deny the person, the office, and the operations of God the Holy Ghost. By nature we know nothing of those real and necessary distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as subsisting in a covenant Jehovah. When Paul came to Ephesus he found some who professed to be disciples, and therefore, as they professed

to believe, he asked them, if they had received the Holy Ghost; to which question they honestly replied, that they did not know whether there was any Holy Ghost. If this question was put to many who profess to hold the doctrine of the Trinity, whether they had received the Holy Ghost; if honest, they would return the same answer, and confess, that as to any knowledge or experience of his grace and influence, or of his operations upon the soul, they know not whether there be any Holy Ghost. All they know of the matter is this, that it is a doctrine contained in the Scriptures, and in the articles of their religion; but though they pray, according to the liturgy of the church, that God would cleanse the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit; and that he would assist them mercifully in their supplications and prayers, nevertheless they would call it madness, folly, or enthusiasm, to talk of the inspiration of the Spirit, or to expect divine assistance. None have been more guilty of this than myself, I confess it to



my shame ; and I know, from happy experience, that it is not the unpardonable sin to deny either the person, the office, or the operation of the Holy Ghost. Remembering my own blindness and ignorance and rebellion of heart, and feeling my obligations to divine love and mercy ; may I never cease to tell, that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.

As it does not constitute the sin against the Holy Ghost to deny his person, office, or operation, so neither does it constitute that sin to resist, grieve, or quench the Spirit. Alas ! may one say, I have reason to believe that the Spirit has been at work with me for many years ; I have had at times some sweet light and understanding in the blessed word of God ; I have felt at times some sweet meltings of soul, some holy longings, and heavenly desires ; but I am now so dead ; I feel so much hardness of heart, so much sin and corruption, I am ready to conclude that my past experience has been nothing more than a delusive

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dream,

dream, it has been all fancy, and a vain imagination arising from the workings of my natural passions; or else, if the Spirit has been at work and striving with me, I have so resisted, grieved, and quenched him, and have done such despite unto him as amounts to the unpardonable sin, so that he will strive with me no more, but give me up to a reprobate mind. It is true, God's Spirit will not always strive with man; for, however perverse, obstinate, or rebellious the heart of man may be, nevertheless, if God begins the work, he will be sure to finish it: it shall never be said that man is too hard for God. What! Man! who is as the grass of the field: As it is written, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." Now as all flesh is as grass: let the Spirit of the Lord blow upon it, in conviction, then the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, and the goodliness thereof passeth away. If God should strive with a sinner, and it should appear in the contest, that the sinner is too hard for God, what a poor God must he be thus to be

be overcome by an arm of flesh ! Grace may be resisted, but will finally prevail. As long as we live in this world we shall experience a striving between the flesh and the Spirit, for these are contrary one to the other. What is it to resist, to grieve, or quench the Spirit, but to think or do those things which are displeasing in the sight of God, and contrary to those holy motions and good desires which the Spirit sometimes puts into our minds, powerfully influencing us to that which is good ? But, alas ! there is a law in the members warring against the law in the mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members. He who has committed the unpardonable sin is a stranger to these spiritual conflicts, this inward warfare, and the fight of Faith—yet he is not without a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

Some have considered every sin, wilfully committed after baptism or the Lord's supper, to be unpardonable ; but such an

opinion is so contrary to truth, that I shall not attempt to confute it.

Having thus far shewn *what is not*: I come now to shew *what is*, the sin against the Holy Ghost.

To constitute this sin there must be both light and spite: light without spite, nor yet spite without light, cannot constitute this sin. For instance, Paul had spite when he persecuted the church of Christ; but he had not light, for he did it ignorantly, in unbelief: on the other hand, Peter had light, but he had no spite nor malice in his heart against his Lord; he was entirely overcome by fear, through the weakness of the flesh, and the violence of the temptation.

When I say there must be light, I do not mean true spiritual and experimental light and knowledge, whereby the heart is effectually wrought upon, and savingly changed; but I mean such an illumination as  
Balaam



Balaam or Saul had, which extended no further than the natural understanding, whereby a literal knowledge of the scriptures may be acquired, particular doctrines may be received and acknowledged as true, without experiencing any thing of their power, without knowing any thing of their value, without any heart-felt love and affection towards them, or any of that rich, and sweet, and savoury delight and enjoyment in them, which proves faith to be no fiction, and confirms the reality of things not seen. There is a difference between acknowledging certain doctrinal propositions to be true, understanding them clearly in the judgment, receiving them as articles of faith, and receiving the truth in the love thereof, from an experience of its influence. A man may go so far as to preach the doctrines of grace clearly, from strength of memory and a good natural understanding, assisted, it may be, with common illuminations, without knowing the grace of God in truth; he may have that knowledge which puffeth up, without that charity that edifieth. Ba-

laam spoke many great truths ; he had an OPEN VISION, but not the *vision of faith*, in and by which salvation is brought home, and realized, and the earnest is received. He got his knowledge in a dream, falling into a trance, having his eyes open : yet he turned courtier, entered into connexion with Balak, conspired with him how to root out and destroy the Lord's people, and taught him to put a stumbling block before Israel. Though Balaam preached most glorious truths, yet he never, in his heart, loved the *truth*, because he never experienced its power ; and at last his malice was made manifest, not avowedly against Christ, in his own person, but against his people, against his grace, and the power of godliness. It is the same now. It would not answer the devil's purpose openly to deny the scriptures, or to blaspheme Christ or the Holy Ghost ; but it must be done secretly, under the profession of religion : the wolf must not appear with his rough hairy skin, but he must wear the sheep's soft clothing ; with affected humility, and pretended

pretended zeal for God and godliness ; a violent outcry against open and notorious sins ; strenuously enforcing moral precepts, and laying down rules for moral (which they call holy) living.

Is there a plain and simple-hearted follower of Jesus, whose desire is to magnify the riches of divine grace, who speaks from his own experience of the evil of sin, of the evil of his nature ; whose end and aim is to abase the sinner, and exalt the Saviour ; who endeavours to lay open the mystery of iniquity, and the deceivableness of unrighteousness ; to shew the danger of a legal spirit, and to beat off the sinner from all dependence upon self, and from all opinion of any power, or wisdom, or goodness, or righteousness, or holiness, but what he has in and from Christ, ascribing salvation full and free to the unmerited grace, love, and mercy, of his God and Saviour ? This man will often, unexpectedly to himself, be the occasion of provoking that malice, and calling it forth into action, which before had lain

lain hid and smothered in the breast of some Judas or Balaam, by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of, many of God's dear children are often prejudiced one against another, from evil reports and misrepresentations. "Needs must that offences come, but woe be to that man by whom the offence cometh; it would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

The Pharisees, we find; when they could not deny but that a miracle had been wrought by our blessed Lord; when they could not disprove the fact, ascribed it to the devil. Though he was in himself holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who did no evil, neither was guile found in his mouth, nor yet in his heart, for he went about doing good; yet his spotless life, his holy walk and conversation, could not exempt him from the vilest aspersions, and the most opprobrious names. They blackened his character as a licentious liver; they called him a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber;



bibber ; they charged him with encouraging men in sin, as being a friend of publicans and sinners ; they told him to his face, “ Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil.” Judas charged him with extravagance and want of charity to the poor. “ If they  
 “ call the master of the house Beelzebub,  
 “ how much more them of his household ?”

Every sin is conceived in the heart before it breaks forth into action, and shews itself openly ; so it is with this particular sin. The heart growing callous with a long profession of religion, and not finding that satisfaction in it which was expected, and still willing to turn it to the best advantage, and make as much of it as possible ; advancement in the world is sought after ; emoluments, homage, respect, and reverence, or a great name is aimed at, to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi. To this end, in order to strengthen each other's hands, connexions are formed, confederacies are entered into, upon this principle, “ You  
 “ commend me, and I'll commend you.”

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Is there one whose unaccommodating temper, whose rigid inflexibility cannot be moved, who will speak what he feels, regardless of the consequences—what must be done with him? There was a device which the priests practised against Jeremiah, to which recourse is had in the present day. Report, say they, and we will report it; any thing, no matter what, if it be but likely to stir up prejudice, peradventure we may prevail against him, and take our revenge of him. I myself am well acquainted with a circumstance of this nature which happened in a large manufacturing town, where a minister of the gospel had laboured, not without success, though much opposed. A visible reformation of manners had taken place among some who had been notoriously immoral and profane; which could not be denied. This circumstance being alledged in answer to a charge brought against the doctrines, which this minister had been preaching, as having a licentious tendency, a very eminent professor flew into a rage, and discovered the malice which  
lay

lay lurking in his heart, by declaring, that if any good had been done by that fellow, it must have been done of the devil. If this does not answer exactly to the sin against the Holy Ghost, nothing does.

In this sin the malignity of the heart discovers itself chiefly against the power of godliness, and against those who contend most earnestly for the Spirit's work; against those ministers of the Spirit who distinguish between the letter which killeth, and the Spirit which giveth life; who shew the difference between serving in the oldness of the letter and the newness of the Spirit; who set forth the glory of the gospel as a dispensation of grace, the ministration of the Spirit, and the ministration of righteousness. In this sin the malignity arising from disappointment (as to any heart-felt satisfaction in religion) is added to the natural enmity of the heart, which being judicially hardened, the conscience is seared, and the measure of iniquity is now filled up. It is not necessary to constitute this sin that some open blasphemies be uttered, either  
against

against the Holy Ghost or against those who are called and sent by him. No overt act is necessary, in the sight of God, to prove the indwelling of sin in any heart, for he knows what is man. Nevertheless, where there is the root we may expect the fruit, and the residence of this sin in the heart may be discovered, by half words, dark insinuations, winks and nods, the shake of the head, or the shrug of the shoulders, or any way by which an implication may be conveyed prejudicial to the Spirit's work, in the character of any man called of God, or in the doctrines he may profess or preach, knowing them at the same time to be pure truths, according to the revealed word. I say, whatever act (committed by a man who has light in his judgment) discovers such spite and malice, must be, beyond all doubt, the unpardonable sin.

I come now, it being the third thing proposed, to consider the heinousness of this sin, and the reason why it is unpardonable.

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He who commits this sin must be one given up of God to a reprobate mind, judicially hardened ; one who can hold with any party, or contend for any doctrine which may promote his present advantages in life : worldly gain, or worldly honour, is his object, no matter from what quarter it may come. The last state of that man, whose conscience is thus seared with a profession of religion, must be worse than the first ; i. e. than his former state—whether it be of Pharisaism, profaneness, irreligion, or avowed infidelity. This character is exemplified by our Lord himself in the 11th chapter of St. Luke : When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man, not cast out by the mighty power of God, but goeth out, as it were, of his own accord, so that a reformation of manners, and a profession of religion, takes place, not from spiritual conviction of sin, nor from a spiritual experience of divine grace, but from some qualms of conscience and natural awakenings. Gaining some literal knowledge of the scriptures, and becoming gradually acquaint-  
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ed with some of the particular doctrines of grace; a reformation taking place at the same time, they seem, as Peter says, to have clean escaped from the pollutions of the world, through a LITERAL, not a saving and *spiritual* knowledge of Christ; their religion, not being the work of God's Spirit, but founded upon their own self-will, carnal resolutions, and self-determinations, soon fails; not having received effectual grace, nor having felt the power of true godliness. Finding their souls dry and barren after having tried a variety of sects and opinions, they either give up all profession, or else they are determined to turn the knowledge they have acquired to their best advantage, in which they often succeed through their acquaintance with the manners and maxims, the follies and weaknesses of those on whom they intend to impose. But whether they become ranters, avow infidelity, or make a trade of religion, in either case, they return to a state of irreligion, they become as void of all true devotion as they were before they began to  
make

make any profession, and are more hardened in iniquity, and more desperately wicked, and more capable than ever of the vilest actions. It would have been better for them not to have known any thing of the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, than, having known some little of the first principles of the Gospel, afterwards to turn from that holy commandment of life and peace, either to secret or open apostasy. Though Judas be principally intended in the 109th Psalm, yet the curses there pronounced will belong to all those who walk in the steps of that arch traitor.

I come now to inquire, Why this sin is unpardonable more than any other. It may be asked, Is the Spirit before the Father or the Son? Or is he greater than the Father or the Son? I answer no; in no wise. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; nevertheless, not three Gods but one God; Jehovah our Elohim is but one Jehovah. As the distinction of three persons does by no means de-

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stroy

stroy the unity of the divine essence, therefore, as the essence is one and the same, one cannot be before or after another, but they are all coequal and coeternal. This sin then is not greater than any other, because the Holy Ghost is greater than the Father or the Son; but because it is levelled against him whose office it is to work a saving change in the sinner's heart; so that, instead of leading to evil, it is only by his immediate influence that we can speak a good word, or think a good thought. If we are the children of God by faith, and are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law. If this was duly attended to, men would shudder at the charge of Antinomianism, too often brought against the free-grace gospel of Jesus.

I must further observe, That this sin is not unpardonable because of any defect or insufficiency in the blood of Christ, but because that blood was shed only for the transgressions of the first covenant; but this sin is levelled directly against the second covenant,



covenant, in its influence and operation, in its administration and effects.

I shall now conclude, by way of recapitulation, with shewing by whom this sin may be committed, and by whom it cannot have been committed,

Man can judge only by outward appearance, and by that rule he must often be liable to be deceived. Some indeed pretend to such judgment and penetration as to know who will be saved or damned even by their countenances: these have attained to greater knowledge than the apostles, for I can hardly think, that if they had known what an heretic Nicolas would have turned out, they would not have ordained him to have been one of the seven first deacons.

Men may commit this sin in the sight of God, who before men are the most eminent and distinguished for gifts, and make the highest pretensions to extraordinary

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grace,

grace, and may be the most popular characters of the day. May this teach us to beware of men, and to call no man master upon this earth ! May this be a warning to all, who, in any respect, are distinguished as public characters, not to be high minded, but fear ; to watch over themselves with a godly jealousy, that they might not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think ; that their rejoicing may be not in the favourable opinion of men, but in the testimony of their consciences, as having been effectually called, and truly sanctified by the Spirit of God, through faith in Jesus !

As it is not my design to make sorrowful the hearts of God's dear children, but to speak comfortably to Jerusalem ; as it is their edification I have principally in view (for, as to those who have committed this sin it is not likely that any thing I have said will operate otherwise, than provoking their rage, and strengthening their bands), I therefore venture to affirm that such characters

acters as these I am now going to mention cannot have committed this sin.

Not the man who is fearful lest he may have committed it; for when the guilt of that sin works effectually in the conscience, horror seizes the inmost soul, which becomes wracked with black despair; sensibly pursued by the wrath of God, he sees the devils waiting to receive him, and hell opened for his coming, like Cain, or Judas, or Bishop Gardener, a terror to himself and to all around him.

Not the man who is poor in spirit, bewails his sinfulness, mourns over the hardness of his heart, and the corruptions of his nature; whose conscience is quick of feeling, and sensible of the first motions of sin and unbelief.

Not the man who trembles at the word of God, reads it with reverence and with an earnest desire to know its true sense and meaning, without any regard to the

opinions of men; happily determined through grace, in this respect, to call no man master upon this earth, but to make the scriptures his alone rule of faith and practice, with an humble dependence upon the Lord for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, whereby alone we can either know the will of God, or live in holy obedience to it.

May the Lord make and keep us truly honest in the common concerns of life, but more particularly so in whatever concerns God's glory and the salvation of souls, that, in simplicity, godly sincerity, and honesty, we may have our conversation in this world: God cannot be deceived; he will not be mocked; truly awful must be that character who can play with religion, and make a trade of his pretensions to godliness. Yet true godliness will be found our best gain, our most profitable trade, for its merchandise is righteousness and peace, holiness and heaven; nay, it is profitable for all things, having the promise of life, not only in the world to come, but even in  
 3 this



this present life; for he that believeth hath everlasting life: being passed from death unto life, he shall come no more into condemnation, but justified in time, he shall be glorified eternally, and for ever join with saints and angels, even all the company of heaven, in giving glory and honour and power to him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb, for ever and for ever.

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*The final Perseverance of the Saints.*

A  
S E R M O N,

PREACHED, ON SUNDAY, JULY 22, 1798, AT

THE CITY CHAPEL, GRUB STREET,

From JOHN X. 28.

BY

JOHN BRADFORD, A.B.

Late of WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD, Minister of the  
Gospel at the said Chapel.

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As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in my  
love.—JOHN XV. 9.

Keep yourselves in the love of God ; looking to him who is able to keep  
you.—JUDE 21.

Nothing shall separate. Amen and Amen.

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## The final Perseverance of the Saints.

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JOHN x. 28.

*I will give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*

THESE are very strong and striking expressions, full of grace and truth. Can words be stronger or plainer? Will any dare to contradict them? Can any be found, who would endeavour to pervert them from their plain and obvious sense and meaning? Can any, professing themselves Christians, deny the final perseverance of the Saints? Will they venture to affirm that any can be lost for whom Christ has died? What! Can any of the sheep be lost for whom the Shepherd has laid down his life? Can any be lost who have  
been

been effectually called by grace, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise? God forbid. Nevertheless there are some; vainly puffed up with their fleshly mind, and with a vain conceit of their own power and goodness, of their own faithfulness and diligence; who represent salvation as ultimately depending upon the sinner himself, according as he may either use or abuse the grace received. If this be so, we may well cry out, Who then can be saved? But, blessed be God, salvation depends not on the will of the flesh, not on the will of man, but of God: It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that sheweth mercy. It seems that there were some, even in the days of the apostles, who endeavoured to seduce the faints, and shake their confidence. This was the reason why St. John wrote his first epistle, as he tells us himself. "I write," says he, "that your joy may be full. I write to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." NOW—began in time.

time. But how came it to pass that he so particularly insisted upon this point of *eternal life*? Did any deny this life which the believer has in Christ, and which he receives from Christ, to be *eternal*? It should seem so; for St. John expressly says, I write concerning them that seduce you. A greater seduction cannot be, than to deny the final perseverance of the saints. Our Lord has said, "they shall never perish." What a flat contradiction must it be for any one to say, that they may perish; yea, perish everlastingly. Is not this giving Christ the lie direct? When he says, "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hands," surely then he will be able to hold them so fast, that they shall never slip through his fingers.

It is, I am sure, a most dangerous and pestilential doctrine, highly dishonourable to God, and very distressing to the souls of his people, to say, that God is changeable in his love; that he may love you to-day  
and

and hate you to-morrow ; that you may be a child of God to-day and a child of the devil to-morrow. We are happy to say, that this is not the God of the christians ; for he is of one mind, and none can turn him ; and whom he loveth he loveth to the end. Upon this ground we can give that broad and exulting challenge to the world at large, “ Who is a God like unto our “ God ? ” It may flatter the pride of Pharisees and hypocrites, who boast of their diligence in improving grace, and their faithfulness to grace received, to be told that salvation, in some measure, depends upon themselves. But how distressing must this be to a sensible sinner, who is truly convinced that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ! To such as these the words of my text are well adapted, and my prayer is, that the Lord may bless them to all our hearts, and thereby strengthen our faith, enliven our hope, and increase our love, to Jesus and to one another.

In



In speaking from the words of my text  
I propose to shew,

First, Of whom these words are spoken,  
and who they are that shall never perish.

Secondly, I would endeavour to confirm  
what is here laid down in three distinct pro-  
positions, namely, The life which Christ  
communicates to the believing soul is eter-  
nal: as being eternal, it must therefore be  
impossible for such a soul ever to perish, or  
that such a life can be ever lost. As a fur-  
ther confirmation, and as a full answer to  
all objections, it is added, " Neither shall  
" any pluck them out of my hands."

Thirdly, I propose to answer some of the  
principal objections which are made to the  
final perseverance of the saints.

1. I am to shew of whom these words  
are spoken, and who they are of whom it is  
said, that they shall never perish.

The

The context clearly proves that the sheep of Christ are here meant. "My sheep hear  
 " my voice, I know them, and they fol-  
 " low me, and I give unto them eternal  
 " life, and they shall never perish, nei-  
 " ther shall any pluck them out of my  
 " hand. My Father who gave them me  
 " is greater than all ; none is able to pluck  
 " them out of my Father's hand." But  
 another question naturally arises from hence,  
 Who are the sheep of Christ? I answer,  
 The Lord knoweth them that are his. It  
 may be asked again, May we not know in  
 this life whether we ourselves are the sheep  
 of Christ, or not? I answer, Yes. And,  
 if we really are the sheep of Christ, we shall  
 never find rest nor peace until we return to  
 the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.  
 It may be asked again, May we not know  
 respecting others whether they be the sheep  
 of Christ or not? I answer, No otherwise  
 than in the judgment of charity. Man can  
 judge only from appearances. We know  
 no man after the flesh, but consider all men  
 equally frail, equally fallen, equally depraved

ed (though that depravity may not break out in some as in others). There is no difference but what grace makes. Yet, according to that profession of faith which a man makes, so we receive him as a brother beloved, as a sheep of Christ, so long as his conduct and conversation correspond with his profession. Paul once received Alexander the coppersmith, and the apostles were certainly deceived in Nicolas, who was chosen to be one of the seven first deacons. As it respects the state and condition of men in this life there is but one rule of judgment, that is, by the fruits and effects of faith. It must be acknowledged that actions speak louder than words, and that the tree is known by its fruit. Whilst men live as the world lives; conformed to its manners and maxims, spending their days in vanity, and their years in pleasure; it would be a dishonour to the gospel to suppose them believers in Jesus. And whilst men are going about to establish a righteousness of their own, so long they must refuse to submit to the righteousness of

E                      Christ;

Christ; and are adding rebellion to sin, by their resistance to the gospel. What men may be in the secret purposes of God we presume not to say, but if they are effectually called, and truly converted, we say that a saving change must necessarily have taken place. As to this change let every man examine himself. It better becomes him to examine himself than to sit in judgment upon another, and attend to our Lord's caution, "To pluck the beam out of his own eye before he attempts to pluck the mote out of his brother's eye." That believers may be compared to sheep can hardly be denied. It is a scripture comparison: the character will be found to answer in many particulars. In this point of view the relationship betwixt a shepherd and his flock sets forth the connexion betwixt Christ and his church.

I propose to instance, in a few particulars, some of those marks which peculiarly distinguish the sheep of Christ.

1st. They



1st. They are all ear-marked ; their ears are bored, they are unstopped, and fastened to the door of the house, that they might never more depart from their master's service, but become an unalienable part of his blood-bought family. These know his voice, and love to hear it ; these understand his meaning, and are taught to distinguish the voice of Christ from every other. As they cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land, so neither will their feet in swift obedience move at any other voice but that of Christ. When he calls, they gladly follow ; when he draws, they cannot but run. Not that they are able at first to distinguish between the voice of Christ and that of a stranger ; babes are unskilful in the word of righteousness, because they are babes, and therefore they are liable to be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, till by degrees they become more and more established, and are enabled to discern the difference between truth and error, having their senses, by reason of use, more and more exercised in the deep

things of God, and the mysteries of his heavenly kingdom.

As the sheep of Christ know his voice, so they follow him—as their God, their guard, their guide : he is their mark, and to him they look ; he is their prize, and to him is their desire, as their portion and their exceeding great reward ; for there is none in heaven nor on earth that they desire in comparison of him. To his authority they submit ; in his word is their delight ; to his example they look up with reverence, and with sincere desire to be conformed thereto, determined to follow none but as they follow Christ.

They not only follow him, but like sheep they go bleating on ; not barking like dogs, nor growling like ravening wolves. How striking is the resemblance between a bleating sheep and a praying christian ; who goes to the Lord with his complaints, cries to him for help, and with continued prayers  
and

and supplications makes his requests known unto him from day to day.

In his food too the sheep represents the flock of Christ, who graze upon the high mountains of Israel, and feed on green pastures; for the believing soul can only thrive upon the sound and wholesome doctrines of God's free grace, and the never failing, never fading fruits of God's everlasting and electing love.

I shall instance one more particular in which the believer in Jesus may be compared to sheep, and that is their cleanliness, and desire to avoid the dirty path or the miry slough. We can say this, that the grace of God which bringeth salvation, will teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly, in this present world; not from the fear of hell, but from a love to God and to his holy will; and from real hatred to sin, as being contrary to the will of God, and to that divine nature of which

they are partakers. The sheep may sometimes travel through dirty roads, or fall into a miry slough; but they cannot wallow in it like the swine; so likewise the saint of God may fall, may foully fall, but here he cannot lie, neither can he rest, till the Lord has restored his soul. Nay, as passing through a world of sin and sorrow, although he sees the safety of his state, and considers himself as clean through the word, nevertheless he finds that his feet want washing from day to day, that he still wants the renewing influences of grace, and a fresh application to the fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness. But, amidst all the snares of the world, all the infirmities of the flesh, the temptations of Satan, the words of my text stand good: "They shall never perish."

I come now to confirm this truth, it being the second thing proposed; and to shew, "Why the saints of God can never perish."

Because they were chosen of God in  
Christ



Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. Perseverance, with every grace and blessing, to be enjoyed in time, or through eternity, is the effect or consequence, not the procuring cause of God's love, for his love was set on the objects of his choice before they were born, consequently before they had *actually* done either good or evil, but having loved them, he must needs love them to the end, because his love must be as immutable as himself. However we may, through special grace, be enabled to do those things which are lawful and right, and well pleasing in the sight of God, nevertheless our personal obedience cannot be considered as procuring or meriting God's love, seeing he ever loved those for whom Christ died; so that, not even the death of Christ induced God to love us, but his death was the immediate effect of God's previous and eternal love to man: "God so loved the world that he  
 " sent his only begotten son, that whoso-  
 " ever believeth in him should not perish,  
 " but have everlasting life." It is by the

death of Christ that we perceive the love of God; and in this was manifested the love of God. Thus we trace perseverance, redemption, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and eternal glory, up to their primary cause; and that is, God's everlasting and electing love.

The sheep of Christ shall never perish, not only as being chosen in him, and as being given to him, but as being redeemed and purchased by him. Can any perish for whom Christ has died? God forbid. Can any be lost whom Christ has purchased? God forbid. His justice forbids it. If the debt be paid, justice requires that the debtor be discharged; if the purchase be made, justice requires that the purchaser should have his bargain. If all are not saved for whom Christ has died, what then becomes of the covenant engagement, and of that particular clause in the covenant which was fully confirmed and settled, "That he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied?" If any perish for whom Christ

Christ has died, then, as to these at least, Christ must have died in vain. If it can be proved that he has died in vain for one, why not for two? If for two, why not for three? and so on, till it may become a doubt whether he may not have died in vain for all. To this it is objected—that Christ has done his part, that it now only remains for us to do our parts. Here it may be asked, What is our part? I answer this by another question, What part is the clay to act in order to be made a vessel, either to honour or dishonour? As the clay is passive in the hands of the potter, so it is the part of man to be passive in the hands of God, and then it is that he acts consistently with his true character, when convinced of his utter inability to do good of himself, he waits upon the Lord with a sincere desire of soul that God would work in him effectually by his grace, that his spiritual strength may be renewed, and that God would make him what he would have him to be. Are any offended with this view of human nature. Be it so. For my own part, I re-  
7  
joice

joice that nothing is left for me to do, (as it respects the salvation of my soul) being convinced that, in that case, it must be left for ever undone. Besides, if salvation depended, in any respect, upon the free-will of man; if it depended upon his acceptance of offered grace (as some vainly talk), Christ then must altogether have died in vain; for no man can come to Christ unless he be powerfully and effectually drawn; and no man will accept of salvation, unless of unwilling he be made willing, in the day of God's power, who worketh in us to will and to do all that is good, according to his own sovereign good will and pleasure.

This consideration is a strong confirmation of the truth contained in my text, "They shall never perish." That the application of the word, and the sprinkling of the blood, is as much the work of God the Spirit, as salvation is the work of God the Son. We are God's workmanship; God's husbandry; God's building. It is he who fits us for himself, and sanctifies



us as vessels for his own use and service, marks us for his own, inscribes his own name upon us, even holiness to the Lord; and thus makes us meet for his eternal kingdom and glory. What the Lord does he does for ever; the impression which he makes, when he puts his laws into our hearts, and writes them in our inward parts, is so deep, that it can never be erased again. The impression, so far from wearing out, will sink deeper and deeper. Out of his fullness we shall be continually receiving; the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; the word of the Lord, once received, abideth for ever: once changed into the image of the Lord; the more we see of his grace, his goodness, and his glory, the more we shall be like him, till we come at last to see him as he is; and then we shall be altogether like him.

The sheep of Christ, begotten again to a living and a lively hope, regenerated and renewed in the spirit of their minds, can never perish; because they never can be-  
come

come unregenerated ; being born of incorruptible seed, having received with meekness the ingrafted word, which, having struck root, never fails to bring forth its fruit unto holiness ; and its end will be everlasting life. Once made the children of God, what can unmake them ? having received the Spirit of adoption, who shall take it from them and unadopt them ? having thus received power and privilege to become the sons of God, who shall disinherit them ? What shall alienate their Father's affections from them, or cause an abatement in his eternal love ? Shall sin ? No ; not even sin. For when sin had separated between us and God, and had alienated man from God, even then, such was his amazing love, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, to remove the obstacle, to put away sin, the bar of separation, and to bring back the sinner, saved from sin, cleansed by blood, and purified by faith. The Father is the Father still ; the child is the child still. Father, says the poor returning prodigal, I am no more worthy to  
be

be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants. What says the father to this request? He will tell you as soon as he can. But first he must embrace him in his arms, he must fall upon his neck and kiss him; after that will he disown him for a son? Oh, no. My son—this my son, who has wasted his substance in riotous living.—No, no, no. Not a frown upon his brow, nor an upbraiding word fell from his lips.—Rejoice with me, for this my son was lost and is found; was dead, and is alive again. As there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; so there is no separation; according to that challenge which St. Paul gives—Who shall separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

The sheep of Christ shall never perish, because he who believeth hath everlasting life. Now, if there be any broken links in the chain; if there be any interruption, any determinate end or period; it  
cannot

cannot be everlasting. The life given to the first Adam was conditional, and liable to be lost; but the life, which is received by believing in the second Adam, is unconditional and never can be lost. Because I live, says our Lord to his disciples, ye shall live also. Our life is hid with Christ in God, therefore whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die; on him the second death hath no power.

Notwithstanding this doctrine, of the final perseverance of the saints, stands upon such a firm foundation; nevertheless, many objections have been raised against it; which, though they cannot shake the foundation itself, may distress and perplex the minds of those who are weak in the faith; for their sakes therefore, for the truth's sake, and for the honour of Christ, I would answer those objections which seem, in any measure, to deserve attention: which are as follows—

1st. It is said, That the exhortations to  
watch-



watchfulness and diligence, likewise the warnings and cautions which are given to believers, evidently imply the possibility of such, failing in some essential parts of their duty, or falling from the grace received; otherwise, what need would there be of such exhortations or warnings?

I answer, that exhortations and warnings must each have their respective end and use; because in the Scriptures there is nothing written in vain. Exhortations are certainly useful, to direct us in those things which are lawful and right; and they shew us, what is the will of God concerning us; and what is that conversation which becomes the Gospel, and all those who profess godliness; i. e. who profess to believe in Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh, which is indeed the very mystery of godliness. As exhortations shew what is pleasing; so warnings shew us what is displeasing to God, and contrary to his holy and heavenly mind and will; so then we consider these as means of instruction or

mediums of information. Now, because we are directed to use certain means, does it therefore follow that it is a matter of doubt or uncertainty whether the end will be obtained or not? Far from it: on the contrary, he who appointed the means, will see that the end shall be answered. He who has laid down these rules and directions in his word, will, by the sanctifying influence of his blessed Spirit, give a corresponding and suitable disposition; a holy desire to know and do his will; and a sincere concern to live in all holy obedience and conformity to it. As sure as God has left these exhortations and warnings in his word, for the use and benefit of his church and children, so sure he will graciously incline and dispose their minds to a close and diligent attention to them; and so sure he will reprove, correct, and chastise them, for forwardness, remissness, and inattention. The backslider shall be filled with his own ways, the truant shall smart under the rod of chastisement. The Lord says, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their

their iniquity with stripes ; nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him. If the Lord had given these exhortations and warnings, and afterwards had left it to us whether we would have observed them or not, then this objection would, in my opinion, have been unanswerable ; but as we are kept by the power of God, and are led and taught by the Spirit of God ; therefore it is, and must be, the work of God that the subjects of his grace be effectually disposed to observe and do his will, as revealed in his most holy word, which shews that they are as really foreordained *to good works* and to walk in them as they are ordained to eternal life. I would observe moreover, that this objection does not materially affect the question in dispute ; which is not, whether a faint may not fail in some points of duty ? or whether a faint may not fall so as to commit some gross and notorious sin ? This is admitted. The question is, Whether he may fall finally, so as to perish everlastingly ? He may fail ; Who does not ? James says in many things we offend all. He may fall, and foully too.

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The most eminent saints have fallen ; but though they fall, nevertheless they shall rise again.

Another objection arises from the inference drawn from the word *if*, in various passages of scripture, from whence some have inferred that our salvation is ultimately uncertain, as being conditional, and that the blessing depends upon our perseverance. Whereas nothing can be plainer to me, from all such passages, That perseverance is not the procuring cause of God's free love and favour, but the effect and consequence of God's everlasting and electing love. We are not blessed because we persevere, as a reward for our perseverance ; but because we are chosen in Christ Jesus, therefore we are effectually called in time ; because we are sons, therefore God sends forth the Spirit of the Son into our hearts ; because we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, therefore we receive all spiritual blessings freely from him, and, among other gifts or graces, the gift or grace of perseverance ; so that per-

8

severance



severance is the sign or proof of the true grace of God; by this, that which is real is distinguished from that which (though well counterfeited) is nevertheless spurious and base, as being the work of man and not the work of God. All then that can fairly be drawn from the word *if*, is this: If you persevere, that will prove the truth and reality of grace: if, after making a profession, you should afterwards fall away, that will prove that you never had received the grace of God in truth, notwithstanding all the profession you have made: as St. John argues, “ They went out from us because “ they were not of us; if they had been “ of us they must needs have continued “ with us.”

Another objection is drawn from the example of Judas, Francis Spira, and others, who they say had received true grace, and afterwards fell away and perished everlastingly. I read nothing in my bible about Francis Spira, and therefore his name and example can have no weight with me. As to Judas, it is certain that he was number-

ed with the twelve apostles ; and though it may be that the apostles themselves thought him one of the very best men among them, yet it is as certain that our Lord knew him from the first to have been ordained to this condemnation. He knew all along who should betray him, and John vi. 70, he says, " Have not I chosen you twelve, and " one of you is a devil ? " If men have some natural awakenings and alarms of conscience ; if they are outwardly reformed, and make a profession of religion, immediately they are set down as believers ; and should they afterwards fall from their *profession*, it is vainly supposed by some that they are fallen from grace. How could they fall from that which they never had ? This appears to me to be one of the prevailing errors of the present day. Preaching up reformation as if it was regeneration ; or, if not as regeperation, yet as a mark or sign of regeneration. I must insist upon it, that there may be reformation where there is no regeneration, but there can be no regeneration without reformation. Whatever supercedes the office of the Holy Ghost in his  
work

work of testimony, will be found a most fatal error. Such preaching does this.

Another objection is taken from St. Paul, who says, Gal. v. 4. "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law : ye are fallen from grace." The apostle's meaning in these words, I am satisfied for myself, is clearly this. Whosoever goes back to the law for justification after having made a profession of being saved by grace, that to such Christ is of no effect ; for, as he says in another place, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ must have died in vain ;" so then they are fallen away in their judgment or opinion from grace to works, which are, and must be, incompatible with each other, for it is impossible they can both stand together, in point of acceptance with God.

I shall make a reply to one objection more ; an objection which, I am well convinced, is altogether false and groundless, That the doctrine of perseverance has a tendency to make men careless and negligent ;

lukewarm and indifferent in their spiritual pursuits, and in the great concerns of their never dying souls. I can say with confidence that this doctrine, received in power and in the love of it, must have a contrary effect, and will make men earnest, hearty, and zealous, abounding alway in the work of the Lord, knowing, that their labour is not in vain in the Lord; that they are not running at uncertainties, neither are they fighting as those who beat the air. It is sadly disheartening to take the field with full expectation of being defeated and slain; there is but poor encouragement to labour where it is probable your labour will be lost; but, on the other hand, the soldier who takes the field, confident of success, and he who labours, knowing that he shall have a good reward, faces dangers, encounters difficulties, and endures hardships, with a pleasing expectation of hereafter reaping the fruits of all his toil. We appeal to facts. Look at the apostles, look at the martyrs, look at the saints, whose faith is spoken of throughout the scriptures. Did the assurance of faith make them licentious, lukewarm,



lukewarm, or indifferent? Paul knew in whom he had believed, and he knew that he was able to keep that which he had committed unto him. Did this make Paul negligent in the use of means? Far from i

Finally, my brethren, if our souls are established in this present truth, may it be our great concern to disprove the falsity of this change by an holy and unblameable life and conversation, by a strict and diligent attendance on the means of grace, and the ordinances of God's house; by the most zealous and active exertions for the spread of the gospel, and by a godly jealousy and unremitting watchfulness in whatever concerns the glory of our Lord, the honour of his name, and the purity of his word, that his ways may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations; that the truth of the gospel may be held sacred; that every deviation from it may be exposed and opposed; that the power of godliness be experienced inwardly in the soul, as well as the form be outwardly maintained and kept up before men.

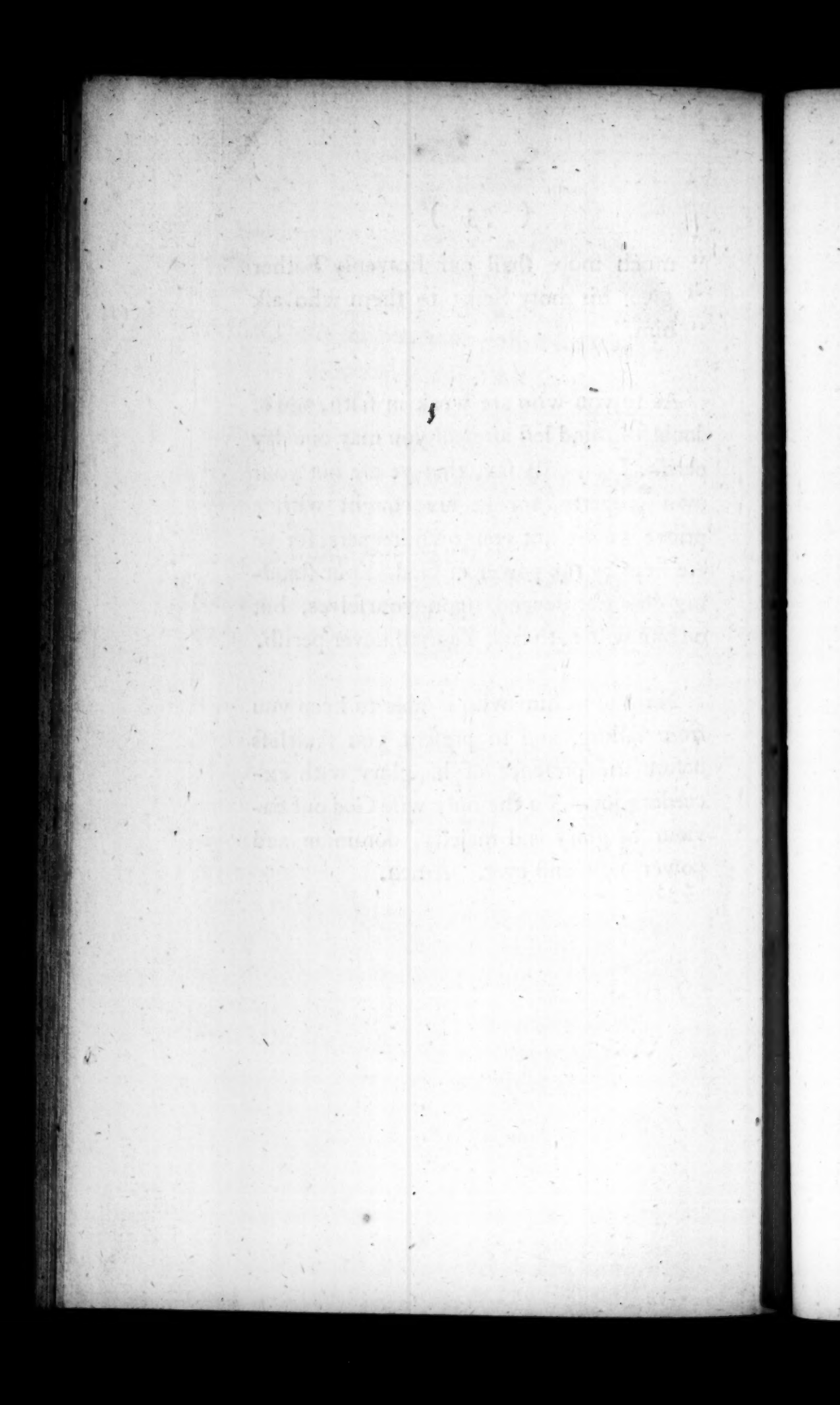
Brethren, we are called to liberty; not such a liberty (as by some we are upbraided with) which gives occasion for the flesh, carnal gratifications, and sensual indulgencies, but a liberty to draw near unto God, and to serve him, without fear, in righteousness and true holiness. May we stand fast in this liberty, and hold the profession of our faith steadfast to the end.

Will any say that God hath forgotten to be gracious, and that he will shut up his loving kindness in displeasure? Impossible! that can never be; you may as well suppose that he can cease to be, as that he can cease to love the objects of his love. If you can suppose that God can change, you must suppose that he can deny himself, and be different from what he once was. Let the wise disputer answer this. Here is full scope for his reasoning powers, let him exert them till he finds them fail, and when the light that is in him is turned into darkness, then, if he cries, the Lord will hear; for it is said,  
 “ That if we who are evil know how to  
 “ give good gifts unto our children, how  
 I “ much

“ much more shall our heavenly Father  
“ give his holy Spirit to them who ask  
“ him.”

As to you who are weak in faith, and of doubtful mind lest after all you may one day perish, I can only say, that ye are not your own property, for ye are bought with a price ; ye are not your own keepers, for ye are kept by the power of God. Your standing does not depend upon yourselves, but on him who hath said, Ye shall never perish.

Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy—To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen.





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*The Saint not renewed by the Doctrine  
of Repentance.*

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## S E R M O N,

PREACHED, ON SUNDAY, JULY 29, 1798, AT

THE CITY CHAPEL, GRUB STREET,

From HEB. vi. 4, 5, 6.

BY

JOHN BRADFORD, A.B. K

Late of WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD, Minister of the  
Gospel at the said Chapel.

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Old things are past away.—

Leaving the things that are behind; and reaching forth unto those things  
which are before.—

Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of  
faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made  
perfect by the flesh?

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
IN SENATE  
JANUARY 18, 1894

# REPORT

OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION  
PASSED BY THE SENATE  
MAY 1, 1893

ALBANY:  
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1894

The Saint not renewed by the Doctrine of Repentance.

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HEB. vi. 4, 5, 6.

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

THIS passage has been much controverted. God, I know, hides from the wise and prudent what he reveals to babes; therefore, as it is the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth understanding, and as I can speak with the fullest evidence and conviction in  
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my own soul, I would say with Elihu, I also will shew you my opinion. I have been charged with affecting singularity, but the charge I deny. Nevertheless I am determined, as the Lord shall enable me, to call no man master upon earth, in this respect, nor teach for doctrines the commandments of men; but with firmness, constancy, and consistency, yet with meekness and godly fear, to contend earnestly for the truth, as far, but no further, than that truth has been manifested to my own soul; and the testimony of my own conscience agrees with the testimony of God's word.

It is not, I know, the eloquent orator, nor the wise disputer, nor the nice critic, who is the most lively and experimental christian, but he who lieth lowest at the footstool of the cross, cleaveth closest to the Lord, and waiteth most for divine teaching, and the special influence of grace. Neither because a man may understand the learned languages, does it follow for that reason that he can speak the pure language of Canaan; that is the immediate work of God the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless it can hardly be denied



denied but human learning may be a profitable handmaid when sanctified, and may be made subservient to many valuable purposes, to explain terms and phrases, antient customs and manners, to sweep away the dust of tradition, and to correct the translation; for none, but a superstitious bigot, will deny but our translation is incorrect in many places. The obscurity of the passage, now under consideration, arises in a great degree from the mistranslation of the words.

Before I attempt to shew you my own opinion I think it proper to shew you, as briefly as I can, the opinion of others.

It was the opinion, which prevailed in the two or three first centuries, that sins committed after baptism, and after receiving the Lord's supper, were unpardonable. Though this does not deserve an answer, nevertheless I apprehend that the translation, as it now stands, was intended to favour this opinion. It is no uncommon thing for men, under the influence of prejudice, to make the Scriptures bend to favour their preconceived

ceived notions or opinions, for they are apt to conclude that the Scriptures must mean just what they would have them; and if they do not correspond exactly, then words must be supplied, redundancies must be cut off—corrections (so called) at all events, right or wrong, must be made, till the passage at last is forced to admit of a construction foreign to its true design and meaning. That this has been the case with the words of my text I have no doubt.

The Arminians consider this passage as effectually overthrowing the final perseverance of the saints, and as furnishing them with a full and decided proof that those who are really the saints of God may nevertheless fall away so as never to be restored.

In answer to these, some have contended that we have not here the character of a real saint, but of an hypocrite; and it is contended that Saul and Balaam went as far.

It is admitted that gifts are not grace.

Covet

Covet earnestly, says St. Paul, the best gifts, and yet I shew you a more excellent way. This more excellent way is charity or love: without which, whatever we may do or suffer; whatever we may know as to the letter; or however we may preach, with consistency of doctrines, with freedom of speech, with energy of expression, nay with success; nevertheless all is nothing; we are but as sounding brass or as tinkling cymbals. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; and where that is wanting, no sacrifice of ours can ever be accepted.

It is admitted that common illuminations may be communicated unto men. By common illuminations I understand extraordinary gifts of knowledge and judgment, penetration or discernment, into the Scriptures and the plan of life and salvation by Jesus Christ; which gifts, nevertheless, may only be natural, or common to men, as men, without any spiritual application of truth to the heart, without any saving

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change,

change; without any real love to the truth : this love can only arise from an appropriating view of Christ, according as I feel myself interested in the blessings of his salvation. It is only by beholding the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus, that we are changed at the first; and the more we see of that glory the more we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. The more we see of the mind of Christ towards us, the more we shall desire to have the mind of Christ in us. Natural men may be possessed of very extraordinary gifts. As all our mental faculties and powers are of God; so upon particular occasions, and in particular persons, these may be strengthened or increased in an extraordinary manner, and to an astonishing degree. This was the case of Saul and Balaam.

Samuel told Saul that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon him, and that he should be turned or changed into another man, i. e. he should become another kind of man, different from what he then was ;  
not



not only as it respected his gifts and qualifications for the kingly office, but that he should also have the gift of prophecy, which must needs include a literal knowledge of the plan of life and salvation by Jesus Christ. According to this promise, God gave him *another* heart; it is not said that he gave him a *new* heart, or that he was made a *new* man. Balaam likewise fell into a trance, and having his eyes opened, he tells us that he saw visions of the Almighty. Those who get their knowledge in dreams, both as it respects the doctrines of grace and future events; who pretend to have seen Christ in an open vision or with their bodily sight; who boast of their extraordinary gifts and grace above all others; and who, nevertheless, love the wages of unrighteousness and put a stumbling block in the way of God's children, seem to be following hard in the way of this false prophet Balaam; and when at last they come to plead their great talents, their eminent and distinguished success and services, may have this answer from the Lord, Depart, ye are

workers of iniquity, i. e. ye have been setting up *yourselves*, not *me* ; Ye have been consulting your own interest, your own honour, not the glory of God and the good of souls, whom you have been smiting with an envenomed tongue, because they would not sacrifice unto your net and burn incense to your drag, and acknowledge *your* infallibility. Jehu drove on furiously, withheld not the sword from blood, gave no quarter to the worshippers of Baal, and obeyed, in his way, the command of God ; but from one question he gives us clearly to see from what principle he had acted. Who is on my side ? - However it may overthrow the opinion of Arminians, to say that this may be the character of an hypocrite ; nevertheless, according to the true meaning of the passage (I am fully satisfied for myself), we have the true character of a real saint.

I must take notice of another opinion, which respects the meaning of the word here translated, *falling away*, which means, according to some, an open and avowed apostasy.

apostasy. This I deny; for though the verb *παραπίπτω* occurs no where else in the New Testament that I know of, yet the noun *παραπτώμα*, which is derived from it, occurs frequently in the New Testament, particularly in the Lord's prayer; but no where does it mean wilful or final apostasy, but rather sins of infirmity, and our daily trespasses\*. I am therefore far from understanding the word *παραπεσοντας* to mean apostatizing, as I trust will more clearly appear from what may be further said.

Having thus far given the opinion of others, I come now to shew my own opinion. I therefore propose,

First, to consider the context,

\* The word *παραπτώμα*, in its various cases, occurs in these different places, to which the reader for satisfaction may refer, that he may see whether it can mean final apostasy. Matt. vi. 14, 15. Matt. xviii. 25. Mark ii. 25, 26. Rom. iv. 25. v. 15, 16, 17, 18, 20. xi. 11, 12. 2 Cor. v. 19. Gal. vi. 1. Eph. i. 7. ii. 1, 5. Col. ii. 13. James v. 16.

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Secondly,

Secondly, to give a close and literal translation of my text.

Thirdly, to explain and confirm the doctrine contained in my text.

1st. I am to consider the context. In doing this I shall go back as far as the 5th chapter, 11th verse, where the apostle, going to speak of the order of Melchisedec, breaks off abruptly, and makes, as it were, a sudden turn, by way of digression, reproving the Hebrew converts for their carelessness and slothfulness in the pursuit of spiritual and divine knowledge; the same as if I was to reprove you. I am sure there is cause enough for such reproof in myself as well as you, so great is our lukewarmness, negligence, and indifference, in those essential truths, those heavenly mysteries, which angels desire to look into, yet about which there is not one of us but is too unconcerned, not feeling their importance, nor estimating their value, as being above all price. At the beginning of the 6th chapter



chapter he exhorts them and himself too, that, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, they go on to perfection, which is taught no where but in the gospel ; that indeed reveals to us all the perfections of Jehovah, that sets forth the believing soul as perfect in Christ, which perfection extends to the conscience, even in this present life ; for, notwithstanding all our consciousness of sin, nevertheless through faith we have the testimony of God in our consciences, that in Jesus we are without sin, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

The apostle here mentions the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. The first is repentance from dead works ; this he mentions first, because this, he says, is laying the foundation ; the foundation being once laid, however it may be examined, and proved, and tried, again and again, nevertheless the business afterwards must be to raise the superstructure. The doctrine of repentance belonged to John's dispensation,

for that was as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Repentance does not consist, as some may suppose, in acts of penance and mortification (so called), nor in sorrow for some particular sins, but it consists in a change of mind, in turning from self, or from any supposed worth or goodness in ourselves, or in any thing we have ever done, or ever can do, of ourselves. True repentance is the gift of God, the operation of the Spirit, whose first work is to convince of sin, from whence arises an heartfelt sense of its evil, the danger of our state, and the depravity of our nature. If a man be under sentence of death by law, though the execution of that sentence be delayed, nevertheless he can perform no act nor deed that can stand good in law. As he is dead, so his works must be dead also. Where the foundation is not laid in conviction, and in repentance from *dead works*, as the fruit of that conviction, there can be no establishment in grace, nor any real life of God experienced in the soul.

Faith

Faith in God is spoken of as another of these first principles. The being and existence of God is a point we should insist upon, if called to preach among those who had never heard the name of Christ. It is one thing to believe that there is a God ; it is another thing to believe that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing our trespasses to us. The heathens of old professed to believe in the being and existence of God, but they did not glorify him as God. Many professed christians have no more faith than the devils ; these believe that there is a God : so far so good, but this does not amount to saving faith in Jesus. Devils believe, and are devils still.

Another of the first principles spoken of is the doctrine of baptisms—observe baptisms in the plural number, for there were divers washings under the law, as well as that particular ordinance which belonged to the short lived dispensation administered by John the Baptist. All these baptisms were  
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only outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace, and proved the necessity of the inward purification of the heart, and the sprinkling of the conscience with the blood of Jesus, which alone can cleanse from sin, by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, for the washing of regeneration is the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the washing of water is by the word.

As the doctrine of baptisms prefigured inward purification, so laying on of hands is spoken of as another first principle, setting forth, as an outward sign, the union betwixt Christ and his church, and between believers one with another. The resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment are also rudiments, first principles, or, if I may be allowed the expression, the A B C of religion. But are we always to be babes, always learning our A B C? No, says the apostle, Let us go on to perfection. Nay, says he, this will we do if the Lord permit.

We now come to the words of my text,



of which I propose to give a literal and faithful translation, with that reverence which is due to God's most holy word, and with godly fear, as considering myself in the presence of an heart-searching and all-seeing God.

But first I shall make one remark on the translation as it now stands, which runs thus : " It is impossible for those who were  
 " once enlightened, and have tasted the  
 " heavenly gift, and were made partakers  
 " of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the  
 " good word of God, and the powers of  
 " the world to come, if they shall fall  
 " away to renew them again to repent-  
 " ance." I only ask to what antecedent the pronoun *them* refers ? Does it refer to those who were once enlightened, &c. &c. I do not see that it can possibly refer to any others ; then the meaning must be this. It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. &c. if they should fall away to renew them ; in this case it must mean *themselves*. It may be impossible for  
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them to renew themselves, or for any other to renew them, yet we are told that what is impossible with man is possible with God. It is not said, that it is impossible for such to be renewed, but only that it is impossible for such to renew themselves.

I come now to give you a literal translation of the passage as close as I possibly can. *Αδύνατον γαρ*, for it is impossible, *παλιν ανακαινίζειν εις μετανοιαν*, to renew again to repentance, *της απαξ φωτιθεντας*, those once enlightened, *γευσαμενους τε της δωρεας της επερανις*, and those who have tasted of the heavenly gift, *και μετοχους γενηθεντας πνευματος αγιου*, and those made partakers of the Holy Ghost, *και καλον γευσαμενους Θεου ρημα*, and those who have tasted the good word of God, *δυναμεις τε μελλοντος αιωνος*, and the powers of the world to come, *και παραπεισοντας*, and transgressing. It is not if they should transgress, or fall away, but *transgressing*, as they do every day, and every hour, more or less. There is no *if* in the original, nor, in my opinion,

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is there the shadow of a pretence for introducing it into the translation.

The doctrine contained in my text, according to the translation I have now given, appears to me clearly to be this. That it is impossible to renew the saints of God, amidst their daily infirmities and transgressions, or to revive and restore their souls, by the doctrine of repentance, and by bringing them back again to the old dispensation; for this can only be done by still pointing them to Jesus, to that full remission, and to that absolute perfection, they have in him. This is the only way by which our spiritual strength can be renewed, and our hearts established in grace, amidst the difficulties and discouragements we meet with in our way; the various perplexities of life; the trials and temptations which are common to all the saints, and from which none are free. Under a deep and abiding sense of our own misery and wretchedness by nature, the depravity of our hearts, and the heinousness of our transgressions, what is there that  
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can possibly do a sensible sinner any good but only the name of Jesus? A name above every name, which when rightly understood, and savingly experienced in its virtue, power, and efficacy, frees from guilt, restrains from evil, constrains to good, and effectually disposes the mind to serve, honor, love, and fear God.

Will any object that the apostle is here speaking of the *grace* of repentance, and not the *doctrine* of repentance? I observe, that the apostle is here speaking of those doctrines which he calls first principles. He is shewing the insufficiency of these to soul establishment, and exhorting them to leave these and press forward to an higher form in the school of Christ. This doctrine of repentance he mentions as the first, and this, he says, is laying the foundation; but he is persuaded better things of them, even things that accompany a knowledge of salvation; and this is a desire for, and a thirst after divine and spiritual knowledge, that they might go on to perfection, growing in  
grace,



grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Will any still insist upon it that men may be enlightened, may taste of the heavenly gift, be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and yet be hypocrites, nothing more than Balaam or Saul? Where can we find a saint if we cannot find one here? *Enlightened*—Yes, say some, with nothing more than common illuminations. That is sooner said than proved. Have I not as good a right to say, *Enlightened with the light of the living*? Neither Balaam nor Saul were ever said to be enlightened. That men may be possessed of great natural abilities, a ready wit, strong memory, fluent speech, and may preach or prophesy seemingly with great insight into the dark and mysterious passages of scripture; nay, that their ministry may be attended with success, and yet they never themselves *enlightened*, is admitted. *Tasted of the heavenly gift*. Some will dare to pervert these words in  
order

order to serve their purpose, by substituting *an* for *the*, and so making it nothing more than *an heavenly*, which, say they, means no more than *a spiritual* gift. But in the original the article which increases the emphasis is repeated twice. ΤΗΣ δωρεας, ΤΗΣ υπερανης. *The gift, the heavenly* — What can this be but the gift of God which came down from heaven? The unspeakable gift, the gift of gifts. *Made partakers of the Holy Ghost.* Observe, it is not said, merely that they received a spiritual gift, or influence, or assistance, but that they were made *partakers* of the Holy Ghost himself; so that their bodies must be the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God must dwell in them; on which account they are said to be not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in them. If partakers of the Holy Ghost, then partakers of a divine nature, and an habitation for God by his Spirit; so that we can now say, Who shall separate? since the participation and the union is such, that if the Spirit dwells in us, Christ dwells in us, and

and the Father dwells in us, and to this very end that we may be made perfect in one. *Tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.* Here we have the special operation of God the Holy Ghost, in its saving and sanctifying influence upon the soul. The word is received with power; hence we are said to be born not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, even the word of God, the seed of divine, spiritual, and eternal life, by which the soul is quickened through the immediate agency and operation of the Holy Ghost; and as the word liveth and abideth for ever; so he who receives that word, in power, in the love of it, and its quickening influence, shall live and abide for ever also. In being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and in passing from death unto life; thereby the powers of the world to come are tasted, known, and experienced. That spiritual resurrection of the soul, from a death of sin unto a life of righteousness, which takes place upon believing in Jesus,

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is an earnest, pledge, and assurance of that resurrection which shall hereafter take place at the last day; for if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. St. Paul says, Eph. i. 19, The exceeding greatness of his power, towards us who believe, is according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ Jesus, when he raised him from the dead.

I might add, that no hypocrite ever had the grace of repentance, therefore with what propriety can the apostle talk of renewing such or bringing them back from what they never had?

I shall now return to the doctrine contained in my text, which I understand to be this; That it is impossible to renew the saints of God, amidst their daily infirmities and transgressions, and to revive and restore their souls, by the doctrine of repentance, or  
by



by bringing them back again and again to receive correction from the law.

I might ask, To what end would you charge the law upon the sinner of God? Is it to convince him of sin? By the law we read is the knowledge of sin, and therein we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but he who is truly enlightened, and is made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, must have been clearly convinced of sin. Would you charge the law upon him in order that he might hate sin? Law terrors; nay, the torments of hell, will never make the sinner hate sin, but they will make him hate God, and curse him too. I am well satisfied for myself, that, however by the law we may have the knowledge of sin, nevertheless we see more of the evil and the accursed nature of sin in the sufferings of Jesus, in the cries and groans of his agonizing soul, than in the thunders of Sinai and in all the curses of a broken law.

In order to confirm the doctrine contained

in my text, let us suppose the question to be asked, How would you preach, that the backslider may be reclaimed? I answer—Preach the gospel—Do as you are bid.—The Lord says preach the gospel, and I will be with you.—There the blessing is promised.—There, as the Lord shall enable us, we may plead the promise; there in the Lord's good time we may expect a fulfilment of the promise; for his word of life and peace shall not return void, but accomplish the thing whereto it is sent.

Is it asked, How are we to preach in order to reclaim backsliders? I answer by another question, How was the blessing received at first? Was it not by the hearing of faith, by the word of life sent home with power to the soul? As then we received Christ Jesus the Lord at first; so let us walk in him; and that preaching which is blessed to our own souls may be expected to be blest to others. If you delight in cursing, What can be expected but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak?

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On the other hand, if you delight in blessing, and if the law of kindness be in the heart ; What can be expected but that the words of truth and of lovingkindness will drop from your lips? Was I to preach to a congregation of backsliders, or converse with such, it seems to me not only most consonant with the gospel, but most consistent with the promise of the Lord's presence and blessing, to speak of Jesus and unchanging love. I would remind them of their past experience, of the way the Lord has brought them, of those never to be forgotten seasons when the candle of the Lord shone round about them, when they walked in the light of his countenance and in the joys of his salvation. Though I certainly should enforce the necessity of repentance, by shewing, that though sin, considered as sin, is the same by whomsoever it is committed, yet it looks more hateful in one who has made a profession of faith in Jesus than in any other ; not only as it gives occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, but as being so opposite to the new and holy nature

nature of which every believing soul must necessarily partake; yet in order to restore, revive, and renew the broken spirit and the contrite heart, I would say with St. John, If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is not only a propitiation for our sins, but who ever lives, to plead what he has done, as our all prevailing advocate, and to make intercession for us, as our merciful and compassionate High Priest.—I would say, in the name of the Lord, Return, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you; therefore, return, take with you words and turn unto the Lord, and say unto him, Take away all our iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips (i. e. the sacrifice of praise). And what says the Lord? I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely, and receive you graciously. It is thus with cords of love, as it were with the bands of a man, the Lord not only draws, but effectually binds the believer to himself, wins his heart, and wears him as a jewel in his crown.

As



As the parable is left for our instruction, we may instance a prodigal and disobedient child, who has left his father's house, wasted his substance in riotous living, and is reduced to beggary and wretchedness. If I see this prodigal in distress, and could wish him to return, what shall I say to him? Shall I tell him of his father's high displeasure, stern inflexibility, and unrelenting severity? or shall I tell him of parental fondness, tender sympathy, and kind compassion? Which is the most likely way to renew, revive, and restore his soul? In like manner, if a wife absconds from her husband, and he wishes her to return, Will he send an angry message full of the bitterest invectives, and upbraiding her for ingratitude? Such a message will drive, not draw. If he really wishes her to return, would he not send a kind and affectionate invitation, promising a kind reception, and assuring her of unabating love? This is the gospel, and this alone will win the soul to God.

But what can be said more than what the

apostle, in my text, has said ? His words, in my judgment, clearly amount to this— That if a soul is once justified by faith in Jesus, afterwards to bring back that soul to the law, or its authority, either to command or to condemn, This is to crucify the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame. It is to crucify him afresh, for it implies that he has not finished his work, which must really be the case, if he is not the end of the law, if he has not actually fulfilled all its precepts and satisfied all its demands. Nay, says the apostle, It is putting him to an open shame, as it must imply some defect in the gospel, if it be not sufficient to direct as well as to influence. The gospel is so essentially and intrinsically glorious, that it is impossible it should receive the least lustre from any creature, or that it should stand in need of any external aid. It is like the sun, which gives a lustre, but receives none; and though creatures may be employed in its service, yet that is their honour and happiness; though we cannot do without God, yet

yet God can do without us—He will have mercy, and not sacrifice. What is the gospel but the brightest and fullest display of all the perfections of Jehova, in all their divine harmony and the bright effulgence of his grace? Would we know the will of God, it is revealed in the gospel of our salvation ; we shall find in the sayings of Jesus a perfect rule of life, and in the scriptural exhortations given to the saints, we shall find not only what is lawful and right, but we shall find such obligations to obedience, arising from faith and love, which can belong only to the gospel of the grace of God.

I have only now to say, that with simplicity and godly sincerity, I have endeavoured to explain the words of my text, and confirm the doctrine which, I am satisfied for myself, is contained therein. Still I confess that I have been, as it were, but just upon the surface, I know but in part, yet would bless God for the little I do know ; the treasure I am sure is in an  
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earthen vessel. Be it so: I would with Paul glory in my infirmities, so long as the excellency of the power thereby appears to be of God, and so long as the Lord's strength is perfected or manifested through my weakness. O may his power work mightily both in me and you, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, as to one undivided Jehova in everlasting covenant, be ascribed equal and eternal praise for ever and for evermore.

THE END.

